

Message Text

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TAGS: UK MORG MPOL
SUBJECT: UK ARMED FORCES PAY REVIEW

REF: A) LONDON 6528; B) LONDON 6075

1. THE QUALITY PRESS GIVES PROMINENT COVERAGE TO THE GOVERNMENT'S AWARD ON SERVICE PAY ANNOUNCED IN COMMONS ON 25 APRIL (REFTEL A). THE ISSUE DRAWS BOTH DETAILED REPORTING AS WELL AS LENGTHY EDITORIAL COMMENTS. BY AND LARGE THE COMMENTARY ENDORSES STRONGLY THE AWARD OF AN IMMEDIATE PAY INCREASE OF 14 PERCENT AND IS CRITICAL OF THE DELAY IN NOT GIVING FULL RESTITUTION OF COMPARABILITY WITH CIVILIAN PAY SCALES BEFORE APRIL 1980.

2. A NUMBER OF COMMENTATORS AS WELL AS EDITORIALS EXPRESS CONCERN THAT THE AWARD MAY PROVE TO BE INSUFFICIENT TO STEM THE RISING FLOW OF RESIGNATIONS BY SERVICEMEN (REFTEL B). THE OPPOSITION ATTACKED THE AWARD AS INADEQUATE AND A NUMBER OF CONSERVATIVE MPS HAVE HINTED THAT MRS. THATCHER MAY WISH TO HOLD A DEBATE

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IN COMMONS IN THE CONSERVATIVE OWN PARLIAMENTARY TIME AND ON A MOTION ATTACKING THE GOVERNMENT. AS THE LIBERAL HAVE INDICATED THEIR SUPPORT FOR THE GOVERNMENT, THERE IS VIRTUALLY NO CHANCE OF SUCH A MOTION SUCCEEDING.

3. WHILE THE GOVERNMENT KEPT SERVICE PAY INCREASES WITHIN THE LETTER OF PAY POLICY GUIDELINES, THE TOTAL

PACKAGE AWARD CERTAINLY STRETCHED THE SPIRIT OF THE GUIDELINES. IT JUSTIFIED DOING SO ON THE BASIS THAT THE ARMED FORCES DESERVE A SPECIAL ALLOWANCE, THE SO-CALLED "X FACTOR," TO COVER THE SPECIAL DEMANDS AND PROBLEMS OF SERVICE LIFE. MOREOVER, UNDER PHASE ONE AND PHASE TWO OF THE GOVERNMENT'S INCOME POLICY, THE ARMED FORCES HAD BEEN HELD STRICTLY TO THEIR STATUTORY DUE AND WERE UNABLE TO BENEFIT FROM THE WAGE DRIFT MORE PREVALENT IN THE PRIVATE SECTOR.

4. IN PROMISING FULL COMPARABILITY IN TWO YEARS' TIME THE PRIME MINISTER HAS FOLLOWED THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE FIREMEN'S SETTLEMENT. IT IS CLEAR, HOWEVER, THAT THE GOVERNMENT IS TRYING HARD TO DRESS UP THE AWARD AS NOT BEING AN EXCEPTION TO PAY POLICY. ON BALANCE--WHILE EARLY REACTION FROM THE SERVICES HAS BEEN ONE OF DISAPPOINTMENT--IT APPEARS LIKELY THAT THE COMMITMENT TO FULL COMPARABILITY BY 1980 IS JUST ENOUGH OF A BARE MINIMUM AWARD TO DEFUSE THE PAY ISSUE AND TO DISSUADE MANY SERVICEMEN FROM IMPLEMENTING EARLIER THREATS TO SEEK PREMATURE VOLUNTARY RELEASE.

BREWSTER

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